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CONTENTS

Editorial		page 2
Delius as Conductor		page 4
Delius and BBC Symphony	Orchestra	page 10
'Send for the girl Tubb!'		page 23
Delius on record		page 25
News from the Midlands		page 27

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EDITORIAL

Once upon a time there was a gnome and he lived in Zurich, or Brussels, or Rome, or somewhere. And being a tidy-minded gnome, or perhaps just partial to ordering his fellow gnomes about, he decreed that all pieces of paper should henceforth be of standard size and, of course, of a size quite different from anything that anyone had ever thought of using before. All of which goes to explain why those members who file away their copies of 'The Delius Society Journal' will be a little annoyed to find that we have changed our dimensions, albeit slightly, yet once more. They may rest assured, however, that there should be no need for further change in the foreseeable future. Unless, of course, another gnome comes along with a better idea - --.

At the end of the summer Mr Malcolm Walker reluctantly informed me that he would no longer be able to type and prepare copy for the 'Journal' owing to pressure of work. Our grateful thanks to him for all his efforts and for the part he played in designing the new-style magazine. Inevitably, his decision has led to a rise in production costs as we now have to pay for the typing as well as the printing. Additional copies of the 'Journal' will now cost 20p, plus 5p postage. As the cost of paper rises with almost every issue, I regret there is no guarantee that this price will remain unaltered. Incidentally, back numbers of the last issue are available, but at present no earlier ones can be supplied. It may be possible to provide xerox copies at a future date if sufficient people require them. On the other hand, I am always open to suggestions to reprint articles from past numbers.

Readers of 'The Listener' were no doubt interested in the selection of 'wit and wisdom' by Sir Thomas Beecham published in the issue of 3rd Oct. 1974. Two of the quotations related to Delius and, for the benefit of those who missed them, they ran as follows:

'I occasionally said to Delius: 'Now Frederick, about this piece, I'd like to ask you what you'd like done here.' And he said: 'Well, I can't remember now, but do anything you like with it.' 'Quite charming. And I have applied that principle to the work of every other composer.'

'You've been told about a book on Delius. Well, I have written a book. I've written it with great pain, with reluctance, with trouble, with anguish and sorrow, because most of the book is made up of denunciations of the errors of all previous biographers of Frederick Delius. It wasn't until I'd actually finished the book

that I realised what a jolly good job I'd made of it. I don't think anyone has ever written about Delius before in a large or small way, whether it be in volumes or monographs or newspaper articles or accounts of lectures, whom I haven't entirely extinguished for ever.'

* * *

Everyone knows how easy it is to fail to see the wood for the trees. When I reported the Radio London song recital by Michael Goldthorpe (Journal 44, page 27) I was so anxious to mention the names of all the composers, including C.W.Orr and Crafton Harris of this society, that I omitted to mention what they would be the first to agree were the most important items in the programme, namely two songs by Delius, 'To Daffodils' and 'Love's Philosophy'. Mr Crafton Harris reports that they were most sensitively sung.

* * *

I must apologise to Mr A.G.Lovgreen, and to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, for the imputation I made in my last Editorial that local politics were apparently responsible for there being so little Delius in the orchestra's programmes this season. This arose out of a misunderstanding between myself and Mr Lovgreen, who has since received the following assurance in a letter from Mr Stephen Gray, the General Manager of the RLPO: 'There is no particular reason why we are performing less Delius in the 1974/75 season than in previous years. There is always so much more music we want to perform than there is room for in the programmes and you may rest assured that we shall be giving further performances of the great works of Delius in future seasons.' In a later letter Mr Gray added: 'Local politics have nothing whatever to do with our programme planning. -During the ten years which Sir Charles Groves and I have worked together, we have always been given a completely free hand in the detailed planning of the programme.'

DELIUS AS CONDUCTOR

by Stephen Lloyd

"I have seen in my time good conductors; not so good; competent conductors, indifferent conductors; but I have never come across such an abysmal depth of ineptitude in the way of conducting as revealed by poor old Frederick!"

This, characteristically, was Beecham's verdict on Delius' conducting delivered during a television interview shortly after the publication of his biography of Delius (1). Even in Beecham's most outrageous pronouncements there was usually more than a grain of truth, though it is not easy to test the veracity of this claim. One needs to take into consideration the reasons for composer-conductors mounting the rostrum, especially those with limited experience in the field of conducting, before making any outright condemnation. The willingness of a composer to conduct his own work would be more likely to ensure its performance, particularly if he were relatively unknown and the work new. In the case of an established composer his presence would of course contribute much personal interest to the concert. At the Promenade Concerts, for years a marvellous showcase for 'novelties', Henry Wood welcomed any such occasion to lessen his heavy burden of the season's work and bemoaned the fact that Arnold Bax, for example, never conducted his own compositions. Generally speaking, most composers in this country have on occasion conducted their own works, some like Vaughan Williams, Elgar and Blias frequently giving superb readings of their works, with a few such as Britten excelling in a repertoire reaching beyond their own compositions.

Delius' is a singular case, his three knows public appearances being uniformly unsuccessful. We now know that he was not, as sometimes stated, the conductor in 1897 at the production of Gunnar Heiberg's satirical 'Folkeraadet'. The highly successful six weeks' run was conducted by Per Winge, Delius being in the audience when the blank cartridge was fired in protest on the second night. Delius' earliest attempts at conducting, then, may have been at Elberfeld in March 1904 during the rehearsals for 'Koengs', conducted by Fritz Cassirer. Clare Delius recounts how she arrived at the Opera House to find him very busy with a rehearsal: 'I saw Fred then in quite a new light. He was conducting the rehearsal in person and I detected distinct traits of our father's martinet methods in the way he treated

the cast(2). (We are left to impose our own interpretation on the word 'conducting' in this context.)

His first public appearance as conductor was on April 2nd 1908 in Hanley when something had impelled him to direct the Hallé Orchestra in the second English performance of 'Appalachia'. That conducting was then for him somewhat of a new venture is indicated in a letter written from Grez to Granville Bantock (then Principal of the Birmingham and Midland Institute School of Music) on December 2nd 1907.

'I should love to conduct your student orchestra to try my hand at it.'
He went on to add:

'I am conducting hard at 'Appalachia' and really believe I shall be able to do it I am getting the score of 'Appalachia' off by heart!'

In the interview quoted earlier, Beecham mentioned that 'there was a time when he used to practise many hours a day, for weeks at a time, in front of a mirror endeavouring to understand this mysterious craft.' Further letters from Delius to Bantock give a hint of this, as well as showing his concern for detail.

'I am studying hard at 'Appalachia', and conducting violently an imaginary orchestra.' (January 28th 1908)

'Please tell the Hallé Orchestra, if you have occasion, that I have in 'Appalachia' three tenor trombones.' (February 26th 1908)

'I hope they will have the third tenor trombone for 'Appalachia' and not the bass trombone. I believe I know the score now off by heart.' (March 16th 1908)

From the STAFFORDSHIRE SENTINEL Wednesday April 1st, 1908

North Staffs. District Choral Society.

Conductor - Mr. JAMES WHEWALL.

VIOTORIA HALL, HANLEY, Thursday, April 2nd. he Dream of Cerontills

CHE EDWARD RIGAR)

"APPALLAC BIA"
(FREDERICK DELIUS.)
"IN SEREPTERNA SACULA AMEN"
"To Him Be Glory Evermore"—(ROSSINI).
THE HALLE ORCHASTRA.

PRINCIPALS:—
The Angel—Miss SARA ANDREW, A.R.M.C.M.
Gerontius—Mr. ALFRED HEATHER, Tenor.
The Priest—Mr. DALTON BAKER, Baritons.
ader—Mr. RAWDON BRIGGS.

Organist—Mr. W. SHERRATT.

Society's Accompanist—Mrs. H. EMERY.

DERICK DELIUS will conduct his "APAL LACHIA." First Performance in the District, and
the Second Performance in England.

AND AND CROSSUS of SSO PERFORMENS. PRICES:—Balcony, Sc. and Sc.; Amna, Received Sc., Unreserved Sc.; Front Gallery Sc., Side 1s. Plan at Wimsat and Watkin, Hanley (Telephone Sc. Doors open at 6 30. Commence at 7 36. Carriages 10 15. The extent of Beecham's hand in the performance under Delius is not clear, but Clare Delius tells us that during the preparations for the concert Beecham journeyed from London morning rehearsals to Hanley in order to train the chorus for 'Appalachia', then returned to the Queen's Hall to conduct an evening concert(3). When much nearer the date Delius arrived in Hanley for rehearsals 'it was difficult to keep him to the matter in mind. He was for ever wandering off to Liverpool to stare at the shipping in the Mersey(4). Delius' high-handed attitude came to a head when at the final rehearsal in the Victoria Hall (probably the only rehearsal he had with the orchestra) seven important instruments were apparently missing, a tenor trombone one may surmise being one of them.

'Call vourself an orchestra? You're no better than a bloody villageband. My God, if this country goes to war with Germany, what a hiding you'll get! You don't know anything about organization,' he is reported to have cried in fury(4). When it became apparent that not only were these instruments missing but that they were not even cued into the other band parts, Beecham (who attended both the rehearsal and the concert) tried to ease matters by cueing in the parts himself(5). Finding that Delius had left after the rehearsal and that the score was locked up, he is said to have cued in the missing parts on the players' copies himself from memory!(4) His involvement here is the more interesting when one realizes that he had first become acquainted with Delius' music on November 22nd 1907 when he heard Cassirer conduct 'Appalachia' in the Oueen's Hall. His first Delius performance then followed on January 11th 1908 when he did 'Paris' in Liverpool, repeating it in London on February 26th. At the time of the 'Appalachia' rehearsals he was also preparing 'Brigg Fair' for performance on March 31st in the Queen's Hall and, with a view to his doing 'Appalachia' in London on June 13th, may well have started committing the score to memory. He was after all in July of the same year learning 'Sea Drift' by heart, (6) not performing it until December 3rd in Hanley on which occasion he conducted from memory, the score being lost. In this light his prodigious feats of memory gain some credence.

During the performance itself Beecham 'with agonized anxiety watched his endeavouring to conduct his 'Appalachia'. In one of the slow variations which was in 4/4 time, he contrived... to beat five to the bar throughout." (7) 'He beat it 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - AND, which turned into five,' was how Beecham described it. (1) In his interview, in his own inimitable way, he recalled with a touch of fancy; 'the orchestra became almost distracted, the public became restless — "Well, what's going on? What's going on?" — something always went on when Delius was conducting a work of his own, something almost

outrageous!' In somewhat saner terms he regarded the whole performance as being far from satisfactory. And, whether through Delius' inability to communicate his wishes or because of the orchestra's lack of sympathy with the music itself, the playing was 'painfully perfunctory and uninspired.'(8) The choir's participation alone came in for some credit. No doubt much of the ill-feeling created at the rehearsal had rubbed off on to the performance.

The concert escaped the notice of most London periodicals. J.H. G. Baughan of the Musical Standard was so out of sympathy with Delius' music that his criticism of this and subsequent performances of his music were often showers of scorn and abuse, rather than considered opinion. After Bantock's 'Omar Khayvem', performed the previous year, he regarded 'Appalachia' as 'still more revolutionary.... Were the work of just half its present length there might be the probability of tolerating it. As it is, interest soon begins to flag and is eventually dried up by the monotonously dull atmosphere without any occasional glow of brightness to afford relief, and the excess of dissonance must have put both the players and singers in a maze of entanglements difficult to get out of, whilst the choral epilogue was the most thankless piece of vocal writing I have yet heard in any work, though with Mr James Whewall's capable choir, there was safety. The composer, who conducted, had at his disposal that fine organization, the Hallé Orchestra.'(9) (Whewall conducted the remainder of the concert, consisting of Rossini's 'In Tempiterna Saecula' and Elgar's 'Dream of Gerontius'.)

A far more balanced and valuable view was given by the Manchester Courier which summed up the performance thus: 'In such circumstances, in music abounding in daring harmonic innovations and complex rhythmic devices, where absolute confidence in the playing is essential, it was not surprising to detect last night signs of hesitancy, an element which seemed to be accentuated by some lack of absolute understanding between the players and the conductor. Judging by the tempi indicated in the pianoforte score of the work we possess, the composer unduly dragged out several of the variations, and the whole performance seemed to lack elasticity of gait and temperament. The delightful vocal climax was sung by Mr Dalton Baker and the choir.'(10)

Another provincial newspaper, a more local one - The Stafford-shire Sentinel - devoted considerable space to the concert which it considered to be of great importance, giving the guest composer many lines by way of introduction before reviewing the performance with more than a touch of paternal praise:

'At the other performance of the work in London (11) the band was complimented for the way it played the difficult score, but the choral forces were said to have sung with next to no understanding of their music. That cannot be said with respect to the Hanley interpretation of the work. Here the choristers struck one as being much the more perfect of the forces employed. They knew the music, and sang it with an intensity of feeling which proved that they had grasped its purport, and were quite capable of giving it form and substance. The wail on the weeping tone of the scale was quite touching in its truthfulness - it was so pathetic, so searching, so tender, so full of meaning: while the hushed melancholy of the passage in which the voices give effect to their hopefulness that the darkest hour is that nearest the dawn, was an exceedingly effective rendering of difficult music. Then again, the natural bouyancy of the race, restrained, perhaps, by remembrance that their days of bondage were still unbroken, finds delightful expression in the closing number The vocal parts are not elaborate, but they want watching very closely, especially as was the case here, when the singers found themselves responding to a beat of a stranger to them. Mr Delius himself honouring the occasion by conducting the performance of his own work. That he was delighted with the splendid vocalising of Mr James Whewall's singers goes without saying. His opinion of the instrumentation of his monumental score could hardly be expressed with the same unreserved freedom. The fact is that the work is altogether too complex, its idiom too original to be properly interpreted with only one rehearsal At the conclusion of the work, which occupied forty minutes, Mr Delius was very generally applauded'. (12)

One musician, highly respected by Bantock and Delius, who attended this and Beecham's performance of 'Appalachia' that year, was Havergal Brian. His early championing of Delius' music has been largely overlooked yet he was a considerable driving force behind the Potteries performances. It was he who brought 'Sea Drift' and 'Appalachia' to the notice of James Whewall, the conductor of the Staffordshire choir, early in November 1907. A brief glimpse at his letters to Delius gives some indication of his tremendous enthusiasm:

'I've been going through your 'Appalachia' this morning. It is an extraordinary work, its sincerity makes me weep. I don't know when such a surprise offered itself to me.... We will have it here and you shall hear your music sung. I'm proud to know such a genius - it is most extraordinary music. May God let you write more such music.'

(December 12, 1907)
'I shall do all I can for you here as I've already done for Bantock

and Elgar. I would give my life if it would push on the modern school - indeed I've parted with a little energy in this neighbourhood.'

(December 12, 1907)

'I am doing my utmost to pull off 'Appalachia' in March/April next and feel confident it will be done. I will make your music known down here. The people here revel in modernity - I don't know why, but it is quite true.' (December 18, 1907)

All this was at a time when he was trying to further performances of his own works - with limited success. After the Hanley 'Appalachia' he expressed his annoyance at the missing instruments in a letter to Delius, and sixteen years later remembered both performances of that year: 'I have heard two performances of 'Appalachia' - one in London under Sir Thomas Beecham when the chorus singing was really atrocious and the orchestral playing really brilliant. The other performance was under the composer: the chorus singing was beautiful and as perfect as it ever will be, and the orchestra was decidedly not sympathetic.'(13) In addition to Brian and Beecham, other distinguished musicians among the audience that Thursday evening in the Victoria Hall were Cassirer and Bantock, the latter having been unable to attend Cassirer's performance of the work.

Bantock had some sharp words to say to Delius about his conducting but this clearly did not deter him from making another attempt. He wrote to Bantock on September 11, 1908:

'The Philharmonic Society accepted my conditions to conduct my new work on December 11th - £25 - so in spite of your severe criticism of my conducting - I shall try again!'

Bantock, still mindful of Delius' shortcomings, replied on September 14th:

'I am glad to hear the Philharmonic has accepted thy proposal. Better £20(sic) than nothing - eh? Don't beat 4 however in a 6/8 measure.'

Still possibly in front of his mirror, Delius wrote again on November 21 to ease Bantock's qualms:

'I am conducting like blazes and beat a better 6/8 now.'

But his efforts at the Queen's Hall on December 11, 1908, when he conducted the première of 'In a Summer Garden'(14) at a Philharmonic Society concert, were no better. Some critics, finding little to admire in the music, failed even to cite Delius as the conductor. Several were clearly baffled by the work:

'It lasted 20 minutes and the frank confession has to be made that I could make neither head nor tail of it. This is a sad position when you sit hoping for an early end. One writer suggests that virtue might be found were the work reduced to a third of its present dimensions, while a very distinguished musical critic thought that people might

wonder why so many instruments were called into requisition in order to say so little! (15)

The 'very distinguished musical critic' referred to was clearly the Times critic whose views were much in keeping with the general critical appraisal. One may wonder what Delius' reaction was to his ecclesiastical analogy!

'The one new work of the programme was Mr F.Delius' orchestral piece 'In a Summer Garden', a work in which the modern 'atmospheric' effects have been thoroughly studied and reproduced. But as there is no organic idea in the piece, no thematic germ of any consequence, it is a little like a play in which there should be nothing but scenery and lime-light, or still more like the effect of an unimaginative country organist who is obliged to extemporize until the clergyman is ready to begin the service. The poverty of material would possibly be unnoticed if it had not been necessary to augment the orchestra for the realization of the composer's desire for effects of orchestral colouring: but the list of extra instruments at the end of the description of the work in the programme leads ordinary hearers to wonder what is the object of employing so many players to say so very little. The work, played under the composer's direction, was received with favour if without much enthusiasm. Brahms' Second Symphony came like a breath of sweet country air in the second part of the concert after the exotics of the first part. (16)

The Monthly Musical Record was considerably terser: 'music much after Debussy's late style, i.e. very vague. (17) The Musical News critic was so involved in the flora and fauna of the Summer Garden that he did not comment of the performance. He could only opine that 'with regret it must be admitted that the word 'Failure' was largely write across the score. (18) The Musical Times was more perceptive: 'the work cannot be said to have made a distinct impression. A certain, vague musing dreaminess characterises most of the music, but there are sections that have undoubted beauty Perhaps the general effect suffered by a somewhat hesitant and flabby performance.'(19) The Musical Standard critic (not Baughan on this occasion) laid also much blame on the conductor: 'he would have been well advised to have entrusted it to other and more experienced hands, for his conducting lacked any ray of animation and his beat was uncertain and difficult to follow. The opening slow movement certainly created an 'atmosphere' of considerable musical interest, but it struck me that this remarkably modern impressionistic music comes dangerously near acting as a soporific. There are plenty of special effects and tubular bells and a glockenspiel are effectively introduced. But clever instrumentation is by no means all, and the whole of the work seems to be carefully planned and painfully laboured: and the scanty thematic (and

to me uninteresting) material involved did not justify its length. (20)

Fortunately Delius' own account of this particular occasion has survived in two letters written to Jelka after rehearsal and performance. On December 10 he wrote:

'Have just come from the rehearsal. I seem to have more control over myself than at Hanley. It went quite well. The woodwind might play more delicately. I have not yet the slightest idea how it will go tomorrow. I beat once or twice three in four bar - absentmindedness! Perhaps tomorrow I shall be quite master of myself. I am at Gardiner's as tomorrow the rehearsal begins at ten.'

The occasional vagaries of his beat and a certain lack of self-confidence could have done little to inspire confidence in the orchestra, with the result of a 'somewhat hesitant and flabby performance'. Yet he was no doubt relieved that the performance went without mishap. On the day after the concert, December 12, he wrote again to Jelka:

'Just a word to tell you in haste about the concert. I was quite cool when I found myself on the conducting stand and made no mistake. The orchestra played most beautifully and it sounded beautifully for me. I don't believe many people understood the piece but they received it very favourably and called me three times Just received a cheque for £25 from the directors.'

His own conclusions on the work's reception were expressed also in a letter to Bantock on December 17:

'... would like you to have heard my 'Summer Garden'. No-one understood it, I believe, except a few. I had not given them any analytical notes so the critics had nothing to catch hold of - they want something which sounds like something they have heard before - As Runciman(21) would say - they like an old friend to come smiling towards them.'

One of his failings may well have been that 'he was apt to lose himself in the music and forget all about the orchestra', (22) a fault of which he was by then at least aware, as his letter to Jelka after the rehearsal indicates. One musician who played under him once only was Eric Coates, the composer and earlier viola player in Wood's and Beecham's orchestras. That sole occasion was playing in the viola section at the Philharmonic Society. Of this he had vague recollections and remembers that 'he seemed to possess a remote kind of personality, and as a conductor did not make an impression. '(23) There was an amusing sequel to this event for Delius was staying in London at that time mainly with the O'Neills at Pembroke Villas, and after the concert during which he 'was very nervous and conducted rather tamely.. the next day he came to Adine (O'Neill) holding the cheque he had received for conducting and beaming with a childish delight at having earned, for the first time in his life, some money for taking part in an

Part of G.R. Sinclair's letter of invitation to Delius for the Hereford Three Choir Festival

bereford Musical Jestival.

Sept. 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th, 1909.

Telegrams: "Sinclair, Hereford."

The Close,

Felephone . 7873.

Hereford. 21 april 1909.

Dem Su.

I am now arranging the programme forther above Fatiral, and it has occured tome, that you may been in Doroduce a new short orchestral work from, under your Conductorship. at the secular Concert on Sept. 8th

actual performance. He asked her to take him to her Kensington Bank, for he was anxious to have the cheque turned into cash as soon as possible.'(24)

Nor was this the end of his conducting career, for he conducted another première. This time it was the 'First Dance Rhapsody' at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival on September 8, 1909, at the invitation of G.R.Sinclair, organist of Hereford Cathedral and that year's Festival conductor. This was indeed to be a composer-conductor's concert for also appearing in the same programme were Herbert Brewer ('Two Pastorals'), Bantock ('Old English Suite') and Elgar ('Cockaigne'), in addition to other miscellaneous items. Being a secular concert it was not held in the Cathedral but instead in the Hereford Shire Hall. Beecham, who much to his relief was unable to attend, mistakenly refers to shivers of excitement. . .in the massive nave of the Norman Cathedral. (25) The centre of interest was the use of the heckelphone. a rarity many critics were quick to comment on: 'a word of praise should be given to the lady who made a performance possible by undertaking at very short notice the important part of the heckelphone, an instrument apparently of somewhat uncertain temper.'(26) Beecham's account of the instrument's employ is one of his most masterly essays in language and wit. The heckelphone's contribution, he concludes, was 'the frequent audition of noises that resembled nothing so much as the painful endeavour of an anguished mother duck to effect the speedy evacuation of an abnormally large-sized egg.'(27) Although decidedly'under the weather' that day Delius fortunately felt sufficiently well by the evening to direct the performance in person, though his conducting again came in for some criticism: 'Mr Delius has not a particularly inspiring beat and the performance . . . did not do the work full justice.'(26) The Times critic also had reservations about Delius' conducting, as well as considering that the Dance Rhapsody fared poorly in the company of Bantock's 'Old English Suite':

'Of Mr F. Delius' 'Dance Rhapsody' one cannot speak so whole-heartedly. He has done so many better things that it seemed a pity to produce this in a place where his work is so very little known. In the hands of an experienced conductor the contrasted tempi, the rich orchestral colouring, and the fantastic harmonic variations which decorate the theme would no doubt produce a vivid effect. But the performance last night under the composer's direction only served to impress the mind with the second-rate and second-hand character of the tunes. The duet between the cor-anglais and the heckelphone ... at the beginning was robbed of its misty atmospheric effect by the fact that the player, who had learnt the heckelphone specially for the occasion, had to struggle to produce the notes in any way possible. There the prosaic dance tune and the still more commonplace pendant

to it were emphasised without a gleam of humour or rhythmic lightness in the phrasing." (28)

The critic did however find some 'compensating beauty' in the violin solo, and his conclusion was on this occasion, at least, pertinent: 'It is really unkind to allow a composer to dissect his score in public.' Other critics were more laudatory: Ernest Newman, in the Birmingham Daily Post of September 11th even went so far as to write 'Mr Delius' 'Dance Rhapsody' was a thing of the first water,' and the Daily Telegraph critic (on September 10th) was equally complimentary, making allowances for Delius' poor health on the day with regard to the performance. Under the caption 'SUPERB RHAPSODY' the following notice appeared:

... Here the composer has utilised not only the full ordinary orchestra after his wont, but has added thereto a heckelphone, which, if I am not in error, was played by Miss Bull, a local inhabitant, once well-known as an oboe player in London, and a sarusophone. We are quickly removed from what the analyst describes as the mysterious idyllic atmosphere of the opening, and are bustled and hustled along breathlessly in this splendid music and superb rhapsody.

'The performance, which was but fairly good, suffered not a little, no doubt, from the known fact that the composer, who conducted, was so far from well that at one time during the day there was a doubt as to whether or not he would be able to take his place. Nevertheless he was repeatedly recalled at the close, and evidence was abundant that the work had pleased its hearers.'

Perhaps Delius might be allowed the last word on this particular episode: 'I had little talent for conducting and, to make matters worse, I caught a severe chill and had my wallet stolen just before the concert!' (29)

This virtually saw the end of Delius' conducting. There are a few occasions when he received invitations to direct his own works. In 1907 Hermann Suter of Basle (who in 1903 had conducted 'Mitternachtslied' there) programmed 'Sea Drift' for performance on March 1st and 2nd and inquired of Delius whether he wished to conduct it.(30) In the event, however, Suter conducted. After the Philharmonic Society première of 'In a Summer Garden' Busoni, who was the soloist in the same concert, invited him to introduce the work to Berlin the following January, but he felt disinclined to accept in view of the distances involved. As he put it in a letter: 'I hate travelling about when I want to work'. (31) Then again in 1912 Henry Wood put 'Sea Drift' down for the Birmingham Festival. Wood had earlier given the first English performance of 'Sea Drift' at the Sheffield Festival of October 1908. On that occasion the Festival Association were annoyed to discover after its acceptance that it would not in fact be a

first English performance as a London performance had been planned for the preceding February. In the ensuing written exchanges the festival planners then asked Delius to state the required remuneration necessary to secure the right of first performance which, on Delius' reply, they found unacceptable and so resigned themselves to either programme a second or third English performance or else drop the work completely. The upshot of the affair was that Sheffield was eventually able to lay claim to the first English performance, with Brian holding back a projected Potteries performance until after Sheffield, and the first London performance not taking place until February of the following year (on February 22 in the Queen's Hall under Beecham). Now in 1912 it was Delius' turn to express annoyance, with the placing of 'Sea Drift' in the Festival programme at a time at which the audience's mind would not be sufficiently receptive to a work comparatively 'new' in idiom and with which they were not familiar. Delius expressed his anger to Bantock:

'Wood wrote me that he is doing 'Sea Drift' at the Birmingham Festival. On the programme I see they have put it on the 4th day morning at the very end of a 4 hours concert. Who is responsible for this friendly act? 'Sea Drift' is unknown in Birmingham and requires some mental effort and ought to be at the end of the first part or at the beginning of the 2nd part — after the interval... I wrote Wood that I would rather prefer it not being done than under such circumstances.'(32)

Wood had invited Delius to conduct the work himself:

'If you are able to be in England on October 1, 2, 3 and 4th would it be possible for you to direct the work in person, as I should love you to give your own interpretation of it?'(33)

Whether insufficiently appeased by the offer or heeding the lessons he had learned from his three earlier appearances, he did not accede to the request. It seems there was nevertheless a slight change in the order of the Festival, and the final programme of this gargantuan feast of music makes interesting reading:

Tuesday October 1 (morning) - 'Elijah'

(evening) - 'The Music Makers' conducted by Elgar,
Sibelius Symphony No.4 conducted by
Sibelius, Liszt, etc.

Wednesday (morning) - 'St Matthew Passion'

(evening) - a mixed programme including Bantock conducting
'Fifine at the Fair'

Thursday (morning) - 'Messiah'

(evening) - Verdi 'Requiem' and 'Sea Drift'

Friday (morning) - Brahams 'Requiem', Beethoven Symphony No.7 and Scriabin's 'Prometheus'

(evening) - 'The Apostles' conducted by Elgar

One can sympathise with Delius' anxieties in these circumstances: on that Thursday evening Verdi's 'Requiem' was followed after an interval by the second half of the concert consisting of 'Sea Drift', sung by Thorpe Bates, and Wotan's Farewell and the Magic Fire Music from 'Die Walküre', the soloist being Clarence Whitehill — the Koanga in the Elberfeld production. Such was the enormity of the scope of these festival programmes. Wood, of course, carried the main load of conducting throughout the festival.

With regard to 'Sea Drift' it seems there was one invitation which he did accept, partially at least. In the May 21st, 1932, issue of The Leeds Mercury Mr Ernest Halliday, who was President of both the Bradford Old Choral Society and the Bradford Music Club, was quoted as saying:

"...Delius last visited the City (Bradford) when he attended the Centenary Celebrations of the Old Choral Society in 1921. At that time he consented to conduct the final rehearsal of the Society of his own composition 'Sea Drift'. He could not be induced to conduct the public performance, however." (34)

For these centenary celebrations two special concerts were planned on October 26 & 27 1921, 'Sea Drift' being performed on the former date, together with excerpts from 'Die Meistersinger' and Elgar's 'Cockaigne'. Hamilton Harty conducted the Halle Orchestra, and Frederick Ranalow was the baritone soloist. Delius, staying in Bradford for the celebrations, attended with Harty a Centenary Banquet on the eve of the concert, both making a speech. Each courteously commented on the fine singing of the chorus at the rehearsals while Delius, in his brief response, said that he found it difficult to realise he had not been to his native city for twenty years. 'I was brought up with the smell of noils and tops (35) in my nostrils,' he continued, 'and it seems strange that my career has been such a roundabout one.' He went on to remark that he did not know why he had left Bradford to be an orange planter, yet he supposed that if he had not done so the society would not have been performing 'Sea Drift'! (36)

It may, in conclusion, require some stretch of the imagination to picture Delius conducting 'violently..like blazes.' But this unsuccessful venture proved of little purpose and moreover fortunately coincided with the emergence in this country of Beecham as an interpreter, who by the end of 1908 had given at least eight Delius performances. (He had never been lacking able interpreters on the continent. As one critic observed towards the end of 1907: '(he is) widely esteemed on the continent but... well-nigh unknown in the land of his birth.'(37)) He was then perhaps content to lay down his baton, recognising how little ability in conducting he possessed, not being tempted by further invitaions. He continued to maintain a keen interest in performances of his works and could lavish praise as well as



Mr. Frederick Delius, the distinguished composer, is at present staying in Bradford, his native city, which he is visiting after an absence of twenty years, for the purpose of being present at the Centenary Festival of the Bradford Choral Society, who last evening performed his beautiful choral work 'Sea Drift'. Our photograph, taken this morning, is of Mr. Delius and Mr. S. Midgley, with whom Mr. Delius is staying during his visit.

Bradford 'Daily Telegraph' October 27, 1921.

be an austere critic, especially when performances were allowed to drag unduly. He would, where possible, often attend the performance but n. + - one may conclude, fortunately - conduct.

- Recorded interview with Edmund Tracey in BBC-TV 'MONITOR' on November 22nd 1959, printed in 'The Listener' of January 7th 1960 pp. 11-12 and later broadcast on radio.
- 2 'Frederick Delius Memories of my brother' (Clare Delius) pp. 145-6
- 3 ibid. p. 182
- 4 'Thomas Beecham' (Charles Reid) pp. 58-9
- This was not the only time that the large orchestral demands of the score of 'Appalachia' caused some friction. Bantock, who had earlier been musical director at New Brighton from 1897, also had associations with the Liverpool Orchestral Society as conductor, links he maintained even when he went to live in Birmingham in 1899. At Liverpool he conducted on January 18th 1908 the first performance of 'Brigg Fair' after exerting some persuasion on the committee. For the following year he planned to perform 'Appalachia' there but met this time with opposition:

'I have had a row with my committee at Liverpool and am leaving them and resigning the conductorship after March. They refused to pay for the extra instruments in 'Appalachia' and then jibbed at the work.'

(Letter from Bantock to Delius February 21st 1909)

6 On July 3rd 1908 Beecham wrote to Delius:

'I simply love 'Sea Drift' - have learnt it by heart and you will be horrified to hear that I play it and sing it on the piano to people up and down the kingdom!!! Everyone likes it! But I assure you that I have learnt all the harmonies quite correctly.'

The work wasn't heard in this country until October 7 of that year under Wood.

- 7 'A Mingled Chime' (Beecham), Hutchinson 1944, p.79
- 8 'Frederick Delius' (Beecham), pp.149-150
- 9 Musical Standard, April 18th, 1908 p.250
- 10 Quoted in 'Music in the Five Towns' (Nettel), p.99
- 11 November 22nd, 1907, Queen's Hall: The Sunday League Choir and the New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Cassirer. The programme also included 'Die Meistersinger' Overture, Salome's Dance and 'Ein Heldenleben'.
- 12 The Staffordshire Sentinel, April 4th, 1908
- Musical Opinion, May 1924 p.799
- It should be remembered that the work played on that and several subsequent occasions was the original version, differing in many respects from the revised version now used. The original version was given a very rare hearing by the BBC Concert Orchestra under Ashley Lawrence in a broadcast on January 29th, 1974, while the now familiar version was first played in Edinburgh on December 22nd, 1913, by Emil Mlynarski and the Scottish Orchestra.

- Musical Opinion, January 1909, p.245
- The Times, December 12th, 1908. The programme also included Dvorak's 'Carnival' Overture, Liszt's Piano Concerto No.2 and Franck's 'Prelude, Chorale and Fugue'. Busoni was the soloist and Landon Ronald conducted.
- 17 Monthly Musical Record, January 1909
- Review printed in 'Delius Society Newsletter No.26' but incorrectly titled 'Musical Times'. See Musical News, December 19th, 1908, pp.570-1.
- Musical Times, January 1909, p.31
- Musical Standard, December 19th, 1908, p.397 (singed D.H.Y.)
- John F.Runciman, admirer of Delius' music and occasional contributor to The Chord, The Saturday Review, The New York Musical Courier, etc. See also Warlock pp.61-62.
- 22 (Clare Delius) op.cit. p.181
- 'Suite in Four Movements' (Eric Coates) p.148
- Norman O'Neill 'A Life of Music' (Hudson) pp.63-64
- 25 'A Mingled Chime' p. 79
- 26 Monthly Musical Record, October 1909
- 27 op.cit. p.80

The Saga of the Heckelphone began much earlier. The instrument, a bass oboe with a compass an octave lower than the ordinary oboe and named after its inventor Heckel, was introduced in 1904 and used the following year by Strauss in 'Salome' and in 1909 in 'Electra'. (Holst was later to employ it in 'The Planets'.) Being a virtually unknown instrument of some importance in the 'Dance Rhapsody', a player (E.W.Davies) was asked by Sinclair in June 1909 to get in touch with Delius to obtain details of that rarity. However Beecham, after using it is his first performance of the 'Mass' in June, himself made arrangements to obtain a player, as he explained to Delius in a letter of August 2nd, 1909:

'I have arranged the Bass Oboe for Hereford. I find out however that Sinclair has been writing to another man who plays the Heckelphone. I am told though that this particular instrument is a filthy affair and will not do - The man who played the Bass Oboe in the 'Mass' has overhauled the instrument and got to the bottom of it. He makes it sound most beautiful and it is quite in tune. I find that it is built to suit either high pitch or low, this being obtained by crooks. These latter we did not have for the 'Mass' - hence the weird noises. But now it sounds enchanting, and it is the only one there is. If I were you, I should write to Sinclair and tell him this or else you will be saddled with this other instrument which I am sure you will not like.' Nevertheless, despite Beecham's suggestion, those 'weird noises' persisted. Knowing the instrument's vicissitudes we need not be unduly surprised then to find in the Musical Times April 1933 account of Harty's 'Mass' performance in Manchester the Heckelphone once again claiming attention:

'This work has obviously got hold of Harty, and although the more occasional wood-wind players, notably the bass-oboe, let both him and us down very badly at times, yet Harty's general handling maintained a consistently high level of intensity . . .'

This may have been one reason at least why Sargent, in his performances of the Mass, in the fourth movement of Part 2 (which starts with an exquisite wood-wind trio) often substituted a bassoon for bass-oboe.

- 28 The Times review dated September 9th in the issue of the 10th, 1909
- 29 'Delius' (Fenby) Faber's 'Great Composer' series pp.63-64
- 30 In a letter from Suter to Delius February 11th, 1907
- 31 Letter to Jelka, December 12th, 1908
- 32 Letter from Delius to Bantock, June 3rd, 1912
- 33 Letter from Wood to Delius, May 31st, 1912
- 34 Quoted by Clare Delius op. cit. pp. 230-231
- 35 Terms of the wool trade, his father's business.
- 36 Bradford Daily Telegraph, October 26th, 1921, p.7
- 37 Musical Times, November 1907, p.739

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DELIUS & BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

by A.G.LOVGREEN

As a postscript - and a contrast - to my account of Delius performances in Liverpool under Sir Charles Groves since September, 1964, (Journal No.43) here is a list of performances of Delius's music broadcast by the BBC Symphony Orchestra between January 1st, 1965, and July 31st, 1974 - that is, over a period of nine years and seven months.

1. That this list includes performances on the old Third Programme between 1965 and 1968.

- That it includes the broadcast on the third network of 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden', which formed part of the memorial service for Sir Malcolm Sargent, was chosen by Sir Malcolm himself, and was therefore obligatory.
- 3. That it includes recordings of performances which originally had been given before 1965 all three broadcasts of 'Sea Drift', for example, fall into this category.
- 4. That it includes broadcasts given on Radios 2 or 4 or their equivalents, between 1965 and 1969, of Saturday evening Promenade concerts.

Here is the complete list, as extracted from the 'Radio Times'. I apologise, naturally, if I have inadvertently missed any performance. A. Third network broadcasts

- 24.1.65 'A Song before Sunrise' Sargent (Music Programme).
- 30.1.65 'North Country Sketches' -Sargent (Third Programme Live from public concert.)
- 8.9.66. 'A Mass of Life' Sargent (Third Programme Live from public concert)
- 21.2.67 'Sea Drift' Sargent (Music Programme Recording of pre-1965 Prom.)
- ?.11.67 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden' Colin Davis (Network Three Live? from Sargest Memorial Service)
- 4.1.68 'Sea Drift' Sargent (Music Programme Recording of 1962 Prom)(N.B. A different performance from the rebroadcast of 21.2.67)
- 28.1.69 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' Sargent (Music Programme recording of 1968 Prom?)
- 24.11.69 'Eventyr' Del Mar (Music Programme Recorded concert)
- 26.8.70 'Brigg Fair' Pritchard (Radio 3 Live from Prom concert)
- 2.11.70 'Violin Concerto' Pritchard (Radio 3 Recorded Concert)
- 28.6.71 'A Mass of Life' Del Mar (Radio 3 Recorded concert)
- 1972 No Delius work broadcast by BBC Symphony Orchestra.
- 21.1.73 'Sea Drift' Kempe (Radio 3 recording of pre-1965 broadcast)
- 21.5.73 'A Mass of Life' Del Mar (Radio 3 rebroadcast of recorded concert of 28.6.71)
- 30.7.74 'First Dance Rhapsody' Pritchard (Radio 3 Live from Prom concert)
- B. Radios 2 or 4 broadcasts (all live from Saturday evening Prom concerts)
- 11.9.65 'Paris' Sargent
- 23.7.66 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' -Sargent
- 19.7.69 Violin Concerto Meredith Davies
- 16.8.69 'First Dance Rhapsody' Malcolm Arnold

Since the broadcast of 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden' was in a special category, I think that it can be excluded from our present survey. Thus a careful analysis of the performances detailed above reveals that, within the dates given in the first paragraph, the BBC Symphony Orchestra has either broadcast live or recorded and subsequently broadcast on the Third network at most only eight works by Delius, and only one of these more than once.

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viz: 'A Song before Sunrise'
'North Country Sketches'
'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring'
'A Mass of Life'(two separate performances, broadcast altogether three times.)
'Eventyr'
'Eventyr'
'Brigg Fair'
'First Dance Rhapsody'
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Eight works in nearly ten years! (-or, to be absolutely precise, in 3499 days). Even when we add the broadcasts on other networks, this only brings in one additional work - 'Paris' - and gives a total number (excluding repeats) of twelve performances of nine works.

To put it in another way, since January 1965 (unless it has unbeknown to me recorded them for subsequent broadcasts which have not yet been given) the BBC Symphony Orchestra has not played - to mention only the most obvious works which it has neglected:

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'Appalachia' 'In a Summer Garden'
'Sea Drift' 'Summer Night on the River'
'Songs of Sunset' 'A Song of Summer'
'Song of the High Hills'
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One could add to the above list a dozen other works, all written after 1900, and most when the composer was at the height of his powers.

In fairness to the BBC, it must be acknowledged that other BBC orchestras have, during the same period, given many excellent performances of Delius's music -and, of course, the BBC has broadcast performances by other orchestras, including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hallé. Nevertheless, to meeit seems shameful that the nation's main broadcasting orchestra, a part of the policy of which, it is surely not unreasonable to expect, should be to foster and keep alive interest in the music of leading British composers of all periods, should neglect so lamentably the music of one of the greatest (pace certain fashionable critics) of these composers.

Since the above analysis was compiled, the BBC.Symphony Orchestra has broadcast two more works by Delius, as follows:

14.10.74 - 'Life's Dance' - Del Mar (Radio 3, recording of studio concert 17.11.73)

9.11.74 - 'In a Summer Garden' - Andrew Davis (Radio 3, recording of concert from Brighton 20.10.74)

"SEND FOR THE GIRL TUBB !"

by CHRISTOPHER REDWOOD

One afternoon towards the end of last summer it was my unique privelege to take tea with two ladies whose combined ages totalled one hundred and eighty-seven years, both of them musicians. The younger, at 87, was Miss Vally Lasker, one of Holst's erstwhile assistants at St Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith, while the elder, at 98, was the well-known singer Miss Carrie Tubb. Both were extremely interesting to talk to, not least because each had met Delius in the days when he was fit and healthy.

Miss Lasker, whose conversation with me naturally centred around Holst, remembered one brief meeting with Delius when she was studying the piano with Adine O'Neill. Miss Tubb, on the other hand, had sung his music before him on more than one occasion, once even rehearsing in his presence. The latter event took place on a Sunday evening in about 1911 at a Music Club concert in the Small Queen's Hall. The work she sang was the 'Five Songs with Orchestra', which Sir Thomas Beecham was then conducting for the first time. It would appear that he was none too familiar with the score, for at the rehearsal he laid down his baton with a conclusory gesture after the fourth song.

'But Sir Thomas,' ventured Miss Tubb, 'there is one more song vet'.
'Really?' and, turning to the composer, 'is that so, Mr Bellus?
'Yes, of course.'

The rehearsal recommenced.

'I believe Delius was extremely handsome in those days,' I suggested.

'Well, I wouldn't call him exactly handsome when I met him. After all he was nearly fifty and had lost a good deal of his hair; but he certainly had an aura about him. As soon as you met him you knew 'here was somebody'.'

This was the first of several performances of the songs given by Carrie Tubb, but it was not the first time she had sung in front of the composer, for she has the distinction of having taken part in the first British performances of 'A Village Romeo and Juliet' Having begun her professional career by singing in a concert party at Margate in the seasons 1907 to 1909 inclusive, she was engaged by Beecham for his celebrated 1910 season of opera at Covent Garden. Here she played the part of the 5th Maiden in the British premiere of Richard Strauss' 'Electra', the Witch in 'Hansel and Gretel', and the Mother in 'The Tales of Hoffmann'. Then came 'A Village Romeo and Juliet'.

One day when things were not going well at rehearsal, she heard Beecham's stentorian command:

'Send for the girl Tubb!' and when she appeared, 'turn your back on me and count thirty bars!'

(It may be added in parenthesis that Beecham at this time was thirty one years old, while 'the girl Tubb' was thirty four!)

'How did you like working with him?' I asked.

'Oh, he was all right so long as you knew your job', she replied.

Did she agree that singers were much less competent musicians in those days?

'Yes, undoubtedly. We had two things in my day: a voice and the capacity to work. The rest was up to you.'

Amongst the singers with whom she worked, Miss Tubb remembers Robert Radford, Frederick Austin, Walter Hyde, and - the one she held in highest esteem, both as singer and person - the bass-baritone Harry Dearth. The last two, of course, also took part in that first English production of 'A Village Romeo and Juliet', playing the roles of Sali and Manz respectively.

In 1914, she shared a bill with Adelina Patti. The diva sang Mozart's 'Voi che sapete', and the inevitable 'Home, sweet home' as an encore. At the end people stood on their chairs waving handkerchiefs. On several occasions she was presented to the King (George V) who told her he was fond of 'La Bohème' and 'Madame Butterfly'.

Did she not think it marvellous to have lived to such a great age? 'Well, I think it's wonderful,' she replied. 'Oh yes, God has been very good to me.' And indeed He has. Only a few weeks before our meeting, Miss Tubb had attended a performance of 'The Marriage of Figaro' at the Royal College of Music and the party afterwards, at which, I am told, she politely declined to sit down, and made a speech to the guests. Her only regret in life, so far as I could discover, was the failure of her grandson to make her a great-grand-mother!

DELIUS ON RECORD

by EDWARD GREENFIELD



Frederick Delius

'KOANGA', just recorded, gives a new and exciting slant on the composer

IT PUZZLES me why the first complete recording of Delius's opera "Koanga" has been greeted by devotees of the composer with less than complete enthusiasm. Can it be that the work is too red-blooded? At times, I suspect that, with the pathetic image of the blind and paralysed composer in mind, the Delian initiate may even subconsciously desire failure.

Beecham was different, of course. I remember a dedicated Delian telling me with bated breath of the great moment when, waiting for a hired car in company with Sir Thomas, he dared to address him with a remark designed to promote casual conversation. "Tell me, Sir Thomas," he began, "which de you prefer, Delius's Dance Rhapsody No. 1 or the Dance Rhapsody No. 2?" Beecham thought for a moment and

shrugged. "I can't say I think very much of either of them."

The odd thing was that my Delian friend told the story in all seriousness. To him it was rather sheeting that Beecham of all people should even with tongue in cheek disparage anything the Master wrote. Yet to me it shows one very clear reason why Beecham was the composer's supreme interpreter: he did not accept the music as the word of God and concerned himself above all with how to make it communicate.

It was Beecham who presented the opera "Koanga" at Covent Garden in 1935. Without the help of a complete recording and with an inept text he failed then to convince the wider public. But to my mind here is a piece which unlike Delius's other operas—

beautiful all of them but damp as drama—could quite conceivably find its way into the regular repertory. To the newly established English National Opera I seriously suggest this as a work which at the Colliseum might even emerge as a Delian counterpart of "Porgy and Bess."

"Koanga," I am sure, has far more chance to succeed, whatever the devotees may say, than "A Village Romeo and Juliet," and in this I am sustained by the gutsy qualities underlined in the complete recording which has just appeared (Groves/LSO on HMV SLS 974, two discs). Your died-in-the-wool Delian may by temperament prefer the later, more obviously refined opera, but on this showing "Koanga" has far more of the red-blooded heart-tugging qualities which in the final analysis make any opera a success in the repertory.

Written between 1895 and 1897, four or five years earlier than "A Village Romeo," it stirs Delius to some of his most vivid atmosphere painting—the world of the cotton plantation in the Southern states which he knew from his years in Florida. Negro choruses, unaccompanied or sung offstage or emerging in descant at climaxes, are strategically placed to tauten the score, to focus its impact.

The story is simple—the arrival of the African prince, Koanga, among a consignment of slawes, his love for the mulatte girl, Palmyra, and her abduction when all is set for happiness. With prologue and epilogue the story is told in flashback, but otherwise the three acts are compactly laid out with Verdian ensembles and big Puccinian ariosos.

The haunting Creole dance "La Calinda" — the only passage which has had any popular success — is not an instrumental interlude as one might expect (comparable to the "Walk to the Paradise Garden" from "A Village Romeo") but a choral number accompanying the wedding of Koanga and Palmyra, Another composer might have plugged that catchy idea, but Delius nicely underplays it. He builds up the climax until suddenly the dance is interrupted when Palmyra is abducted by the lascivious slave-master, Perez.

With typical operatic absurdity, Koanga responds to the abduction not with action, not with the obvious course of pursuit, trying to find his beloved, but with lament and meditation for five minutes and more. He blames himself, and calls on the Voodoo gods he has temporarily forsaken.

Told like that, the story may be anything but convincing, but in effect the improbability is no more serious than in, say, "Il Trovatore," when the character of the Negro prince emerges as consistent and convincing. He is a stoic, a loner, rather one imagines like Delius himself. When you come to think of it, the emotional impact of Delius's greatest work outside his operas, "Sea Drift," is based on a similar sympathy. Walt Whitman's poem may be about a seagull, a "solitary guest from Alabama," but Delius clearly wants you to identify with the lone bird, the lover bereft.

The first two acts of "Koanga," each lasting just over half an hour, are wonderfully strong and concentrated, musically and dramatically. The idiom is unmistakable, but it is never a question of the argument meandering, and plainly Wagner as well as Verdi has played his part.

In Act 3 the long atmospheric introduction (some of the material taken from earlier operas) sets the scene in Mississippi swampland and leads through to dawn—an interesting anticipation of the comparable point in Puccini's "Butterfly" a decade later. That relative spaciousness sets the pattern for an act which is longer in time and looser in structure than the first two.

Even so Palmyra's Liebestod after the death of Koanga brings an echo of Wagner that is hard to resist, while the epilogue returning you to the plantation girls sitting round the storyteller, Uncle Joe, is as fine a sunset finale as even Delius ever wrote.

The piece was revived in 1970 by the Opera Society of Washington, and the two Negro principals in that production later came over to take part in the production at Sadler's Welfs Theatre in the spring of 1972. When the Delius Trust then went on to sponsor this vivid first recording, these same singers were naturally chosen again—Eugene Holmes making a noble Koanga with his magnificent baritone, Claudia Lindsey a vibrant Palmyra.

The big difference this time in the version now recorded is that the libretto has been resurbished by Douglas Craig, the stade of the Sadier's Wells Difference in the Sadier's Wells Difference in the Sadier's Will Andrew Page. This is a technique which I have long felt could be applied to many near-successful operas, and here it strikes me as remarkably effective. Many of the Negro choruses are given extra point with folk-based words instead of the sloppy original lines, the slavemaster is much less of an inny than in the original (though still not wicked enough), and Palmyra's response to him now has something like the bitterness needed.

Even without these changes the stage performance convinced me that here is a formidably viable opera. Now the recorded performance under Sir Charles Groves is proof that, in spite of the slowing of pace in Act 2, we could get involved in the date of Koanga and Palmyra even mitre vitable than before, Certainly the music with its rich textures, remarkably similar to those in the orchestral variations "Appatichie," has a direct everative appeal which should endear it to many more than Delians and maybe even to the "South Pacific" public.

appeal which should endear it to many more than Delians and surple even to the "South Pacific" public.

I only hope the English National Opers Company will have the enterprise to try it out. According to Eric Peaby, Delius to the last kept an unusually paternal affection for this score "as though it held some secret hond that bound him to his youth in Piorida." That special identification is consistently reflected in music which from whatever standpoint is distinct from the rest of Delius.

by kind permission of 'The Guardian'.

NEWS FROM THE MIDLANDS

The 1974 Members' 'Musical Evening' broke tradition in style and content and was a definite success, being a great credit to Dick Kitching's broad vision and courage. This season the usual instrumentalists were given a rest and with the help of some 'artistes' of the local opera society a concert of songs and an operatic 'adventure' were undertaken. And so on Friday, 3rd May our members assembled for the concert at Idridgehay, in the heart of beautiful Derbyshire, where we were the guests of Mr and Mrs Clive Bemrose together with other guests from the opera society who were interested in this joint function and who were to form an enthusiastic audience. The wonderful setting of the beautiful old house and large gardens at 'South Sitch' made the evening a success right from the start, and had the evening's weather been a little kinder then a real Glyndebourne atmosphere would have been achieved. However we were very pleased and honoured by the presence of Robert Threlfall at the gathering.

The concert began with two songs positively sung by Robin Dodd (Tenor). These were 'Love is a Sickness' by Armstrong Gibbs and 'Diaphenia' by E.J.Moeran and they were followed by two further songs performed with a delicate charm by Wenda Williams (Soprano) - Britten's 'The Sally Gardens' and Head's 'Ships of Arcady'. Happily Brian Dunn had been persuaded to bring along his Bassoon once again despite the change in emphasis and together with Peter Trot-

man he supplied pleasant contrast with an enjoyable performance of Elgar's 'Romance for bassoon and piano'. Marjorie Tapley (Soprano) then provided members with a real treat - two of Delius's French Songs, 'Il Pleure dans mon Coeur' and 'La Lune Blanche'. The combination of the French poetry, Marjorie's vocal control and the careful phrasing of Dick Kitching's accompaniment highlighted the ability of Delius to write songs which perfectly balance words and music. The song section of the concert concluded with a Duet which has become a Delius Society 'special', when Marjorie Tapley and Wenda Williams charmed us with their popular version of Frank Bridge's 'The Gentle Swaying Wattle'.

After a lengthy break during which Dick Kitching converted himself into a small orchestra (or so it seemed!) and Midlands members regrouped into an unlikely looking chorus the concert continued with an adventurous performance of the whole of Scene Four of 'A Village Romeo and Juliet', with our guests Marjorie Tapley and Robin Dodd singing Vreli and Sali respectively. The performance was preceded by an introduction and synopsis of the opera by Peter Thorp which our guest audience found both interesting and useful. The performance asself came over very well despite the difficulties of rehearsing such unfamiliar parts. Marjorie and Robin are to be thanked for agreeing to attempt the work and to be congratulated on their very worthwhile results. The chorus work showed their lack of adequate rehearsal time but was still enjoyable and gave a balance to the Scene as well as providing some light relief. The yodelling section which was causing most concern before the performance in fact came off quite well and created a curious evocative effect, although I'm not sure whether or not Delius would have approved!

The Midlands Chorus were Shirley Clover, Joan Dunn, Margaret Trotman, Wenda Williams, Clive Bemrose, Brian Dunn, Lyndon Jenkins and Peter Trotman. Although it was a concert performance of the opera scene, we did have some action as Brian Dunn leapt in and out of the Chorus to play an effective accompaniment on his musical chimes. Finally a word of praise for the Accompanist, Dick Kitching, who not only accompanied all the songs with style and suitable changes of mood but also accompanied the opera excerpt on the piano with great relish and is to be congratulated on his powers of endurance. He had obviously worked hard on the opera score and made it easier for the singers by his understanding of the beautiful Delian phrasing and changes in tempi and intensity. At times I found myself listening to the musical accompaniment more than the singing but overall it was a very satisfying whole and much appreciated.

Some interesting points arose during the after-concert discussions which took place over an excellent buffet supper and we were pleas-

ed to learn that guests from the local music club were so impressed with the Delius opera that tentative plans were being made to repeat the performance at one of their meetings — but probably with a more experienced chorus! As there is also a good possibility of some additional members for the Delius Society as a result of the concert, I feel that the evening could be considered one of our best meetings to date. On behalf of the Society Dick Kitching presented Marjorie Tapley and Robin Dodd with copies of the recently published book of Delius songs with an introduction by Robert Threlfall. This was to thank them for their efforts on behalf of the Society and also in the hope that they would study the songs and be persuaded to take part in another performance in the future. My final impression of the evening was of Marjorie Tapley leaving for home with a sparkle in her eye as she held close to her breast the book of Delius songs which had just been personally autographed by the "author"!

Peter Thorp.

The excerpts from "A Village Romeo and Juliet" were repeated on November 19th at Derby Music Club. Why could the Midlands group not be invited to give a further performance in London?

The enterprising Midlands Branch now propose to celebrate their tenth anniversary with a performance of the Delius String Quartet on 12th April 1975. It will be given by the Ruggieri Quartet, a group recently formed of leading members of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra — Editor.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

February 15th at 8.00 p.m. Wimbledon Town Hall, London SW19 (adjoining Wimbledon BR and District Line stations). 'Idyll: Once I passed through a Populous City'. Wimbledon Symphony Orchestra Concert conducted by John Alidis, with Wendy Eathorne and Stephen Varcoe. Tickets £1, 70p, 60p and unreserved at 40p. The Editor will purchase tickets for members wishing to attend on receipt of the money with a stamped, addressed envelope. If 30 or more people apply, tickets are half-price, and parties of 20-30 can obtain a 10% reduction. I would suggest that 70p will probably be the seats to aim for. Please apply as soon as possible, and not later than February 8th.

March 10th. Royal Festival Hall. 'Youth and Music' concert including 'Brigg Fair' conducted by society member David Stone with the County of Avon Schools' Orchestra.

March 21st at 7.30 p.m. Holborn Public Library, Theobalds Road, London WC1. Delius Society Meeting: 'Delius in Paris': talk by Lionel Carley, with a performance of Sonata in B ('No.0') for Violin and Piano (1892) by David Stone and Robert Threlfall.

April 12th. Nottingham. Midlands Branch 10th Anniversary Concert, including a performance of the Delius String Quartet by the Ruggieri Quartet.

May 4th at 7.30 p.m. Birmingham Town Hall. Concert by Birmingham Phil-

harmonic Orchestra including 'Florida' Suite, 'Harold in Italy', etc.

May 9th at 8.00 p.m. 'A Mass of Life' in London. Royal Choral Society and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Meredith Davles, with Jill Gomes (soprano), Barbara Robotham (contralto), Anthony Rolfe-Johnson (tenor) and Benjamin Luxon (baritone).

May 10th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER

May 18th at 7.45 p.m. Woburn Parish Church. Concert by Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra including 'Florida' Suite, 'The Planets', etc.

June 21st at 7.00 p.m. Leominster Priory. Repeat of May 18th programme.